

A Commentary on Hegel

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Modern theology (as matters in general) — especially since the nineteenth century — has been heavily influenced by the application of the *Hegelian Dialectic*. This dialectic (dialectic = laws of reasoning) seeks to comprehend all knowledge within a single system, then follow that system's development through a rational universal process. As it regards the discipline of theology, the dialectic can clearly be seen in theology's handling of the Bible over the past two centuries. In an abbreviated form, using the triadic development of the Dialectic model, the Bible is the *thesis*, scholarship becomes the *anti-thesis*, and theology provides the blended *synthesis*.

Historically the Bible has been seen as the Truth, the Word of God, the *standard* by which all knowledge and understanding are given, and the means by which Wisdom is acquired. In a word, it was, and is, *the Thesis*.

In the past, the Bible was recognized as the transcendent source of infinite Wisdom, while man's innate rationalism was seen as finite, limited, and deficient when it came to biblical scholarship. Although this understanding was the initial point of attack by the Serpent in the Garden, the challenge to the Bible became a finely-tuned art during the nineteenth century, and has increased in fervor to the present day.

It used to be that the Scripture was something to which one aspired; and in the quest for greater understanding, love, and appreciation of God's Word that spiritual growth, as well as temporal wisdom, were achieved. However, with the advent of German Higher Criticism which Hegel's method advanced, the Bible became simply another academic volume, the result of human reasoning, albeit a highly inspired reasoning.

Scholarship of the Bible changed to scholarship *on* the Bible during this period. In this academic model, the standards of critical analysis were applied to the Scriptures just as one would to any other book. Skepticism was encouraged, and questions were invited and frequently manufactured for the sole purpose of perpetuating the scholarly process. Through scholarly dissertation subject to peer review and critical challenge and defense, answers were forged which, in almost every instance, produced a here-to-fore unknown aspects of the Scripture; and which, in itself, raised further questions that required additional scholarly research. Even as Satan accomplished his goal of skepticism with Eve in the Garden, an *anti-thesis* was continually manifest which, in turn, required further resolution.

Theology became this resolution, and willingly joined the task in providing the *synthesis*. New insights into the meaning of Scripture occurred at a frequent and frantic pace. The Bible fell under the influence of the laws of reasoning (the dialectic). Eventually the Scripture became unrecognizable from the Bible of ancient wisdom. In essence, *reason* replaced *faith* when it came to matters of the Bible.

Beyond that, under Hegel Reason was a (The) creative, active force. It was the Absolute Mind, or Spirit, a universal World Mind (*Welt Geist*) which is the Absolute itself. Under this system a personal Spirit was easily replaced by a natural process, something which could be brought under the control of man and his reasoning abilities.

This analysis is not to suggest that Hegel missed the point. It would have been well if he had simply documented his discovery and ceased before formalizing, popularizing, and institutionalizing the dialectical system.

Hegel's dialectic is, in fact, the way the human mind works. This is essentially how human thought processes operate after the Fall. Our struggle is constantly against Truth. Didn't Jesus say that He was *the* Truth (John 14:6); and doesn't the world constantly struggle against Christ?

Scholarship is first, and foremost, a discipline of critical analysis. This is the method we have largely used to further our knowledge. But scholarship by itself ultimately leads to despair since, in the absence of an Absolute Standard (and a Loving God), the quest for knowledge is in constant flux — *synthetic* at best. When it comes to the study of Scripture, traditional scholarship should have no place.

We must approach the Bible in a completely different frame of mind than we do any other book. For "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

The First Hegelian Dialectic

The serpent was the craftiest of all the creatures the Lord God had made. So the serpent came to the woman, [the serpent proposes the false *thesis*] "Really?" he asked. "None of the fruit in the garden? God says you mustn't eat *any* of it?"

“That’s a lie!” the serpent hissed. “You’ll not die [the *anti-thesis*]! God knows very well that the instant you eat it you will become like him, for your eyes will be opened — you will be able to distinguish good from evil [the *synthesis*]!” (Genesis 3:1-5)

To review:

The Thesis: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:16,17)

The reasoning exchange: (Serpent) “Really? None of the fruit in the garden? God says you mustn’t eat any of it?” (Eve) “Of course we may eat it. It’s only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not to eat. God says we mustn’t eat it or even touch it, or we will die.”

The Anti-thesis: (Serpent) “That’s a lie! You’ll not die!

The Synthesis: (Serpent) “God knows very well that the instant you eat it you will become like him, for your eyes will be opened – you will be able to distinguish good from evil. (Genesis 3:1-5)

The result: Since that time, Man is left in the quandary of continually needing to distinguish good from evil. Most often he becomes confused, actually choosing evil over good, pain and pleasure over principle, leading to foreboding consequences!

Antidote for the *Hegelian Dialectic*

Since it is our natural inclination to think rationally (that is according to the Hegelian formula), to continually resist Truth, to compromise (and synthesize) Truth and untruth, and to then be a part of the on-going process of personal, social, and cultural decline, it becomes incumbent at this point to turn to God’s instruction on precisely how to overcome this great burden; and even metaphorically, to partake of the true *Tree of Life*. By focusing our full attention on these words one will truly experience the Mind that is in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...”).

I offer here a compilation of Scripture dealing with this thought based on the words taken from five sections (Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8,9; Hebrews 4:12-15; Romans 8:5-15; I Corinthians 2:16, *Living Bible*). Here we have the only antidote for the naturally degenerative *Rationalization Process*.

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how His ways will really satisfy you. Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about... and the God of peace will be with you. For whatever God says to us is full of living power: it is sharper than the sharpest dagger, cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are.... Jesus had the same temptations we do, though He never once gave way to them and sinned.

Those who let themselves be controlled by their lower natures live only to please themselves, but those who follow after the Holy Spirit find themselves doing those things that please God. Following after the Holy Spirit leads to life and peace, but following after the old nature leads to death, because the old sinful nature within us is against God. It never did obey God’s laws and it never will.... You are controlled by your new nature if you have the Spirit of God living in you.... So, dear brothers, you have no obligations whatever to your old sinful nature to do what it begs you to do. For if you keep on following it you are lost and will perish; but if through the power of the Holy Spirit you crush it and its evil deeds, you shall live.

Strange as it seems, we Christians actually do have within us a portion of the very thoughts and mind of Christ.